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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

July 1985

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are Nancy Drexler, Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, Tom Lenaghan, Kenneth Liberstein, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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**Africa General**

**Africa General**

21/07/85 The Organization of African Unity (OAU) ends its 21st meeting after adopting a declaration stating that most countries on the continent are near economic collapse, in part because of an unjust and inequitable economic system, and also because of natural calamities and domestic policy shortcomings. The resolution also thanks the international community for famine relief. Reflecting a more serious approach to economic problems than in the past, the OAU recommends increased investment in agriculture and a more remunerative pricing structure for farm produce. Additional resolutions from the meetings concern Israel, South Africa, and US intervention in Angola. In other actions, the 51-member organization elects Niger's Foreign Minister Ide Oumarou to replace Peter Onu of Nigeria as Secretary General.

**East/Central Africa**

**Uganda**

27/07/85 Ugandan President Milton Obote is overthrown in a coup led by Brigadier Basilio Olara Okello, Commander of the Army's Northern Brigade. The coup appears to have been sparked by conflicts in the ranks between the Acholi and Langi, two northern ethnic groups who are dominant in the Ugandan Army. Some fighting between troops loyal to Okello and those loyal to Obote takes place. Reports of looting in Kampala's business district and atrocities surface in the days following the coup. The new leaders appoint a predominantly military, nine-man council to rule the country until elections can be held. General Tito Okello is named Head of State; Paulo Muwango, Vice President and Defense Minister under Obote, is now Prime Minister; and Paul Ssemogerere, head of the former opposition Democratic Party, is appointed Internal Affairs Minister. The new leadership is calling for an end to tribalism and holding discussions with various political factions. Agreement to participate in the new government by the National Resistance Army (NRA), which controls parts of western Uganda and has about 4,000 well-trained troops, will be a key factor in determining whether the new government can consolidate its rule.

**Horn of Africa**

**Ethiopia**

00/07/85 No significant military engagements involving the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) are reported in July. According to Western diplomats, the TPLF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) are involved in a ideological and political dispute. In the past, the two

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groups have cooperated in their struggle against the Ethiopian Government.

06/07/85 The EPLF captures the town of Berentu in southwestern Eritrea. Government forces suffer heavy casualties in the battle. There is heavy fighting in the area toward the end of the month as government forces unsuccessfully try to retake the town. Although the EPLF controls most of the Eritrean countryside, it controls few towns. The capture of Barentu, therefore, represents a major victory for the EPLF. The EPLF reports several other engagements during July.

Somalia

00/07/85 The Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia (DFSS) claims to have launched several attacks on government forces in Galguduud region, central Somalia, during early and mid-July. One attack was on a military base in Abudwaq district, and another was a reprisal for an alleged government attack on civilians. In what it described as a major offensive, the DFSS attacked a base at El Mudan, also in Galguduud region. According to the Somali Government, an Ethiopian Army battalion attacked this base.

24/07/85 There are renewed attacks by the Somali National Movement (SNM) in late June and July. The SNM reports three hit-and-run attacks on government troops in Bakool and Bay regions in southern Somalia and an attack on Hargeysa airport in late June. Reported SNM actions in July include two attacks on a base in Bakool region, an attack in Togdheer region, and attacks on two bases in Hargeysa district. These reports cannot be verified.

Sudan

00/07/85 Famine continues to affect western Sudan, especially in Darfur Province. International relief agencies are working to construct a new route from Omdurman to El Fasher to avert a national disaster that threatens 1.3 million Sudanese. This truck route will facilitate the distribution of food to the remote areas of Sudan.

07/07/85 Sudanese Defense Minister General Uthman Abdallah visits Libya for 8 days of negotiations with Colonel Qadhafi and other military figures. A military protocol calling for Libyan assistance to the Sudanese Armed Forces in the areas of transportation, equipment, and training is signed. The

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military agreement is in accordance with Sudan's new foreign policy of better relations with all neighboring states, and proceeds increased contact between Khartoum and Tripoli. It has generated consternation in Egypt and the United States, even though Minister Abdallah has declared on several occasions that Sudanese-Libyan relations will not interfere with the joint Egyptian-Sudanese defense treaty.

14/07/85 Sudanese Government troops clash with Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) guerrillas near the strategic southern town of Mongalia, situated 25 miles from Juba. The heavy fighting represents a government initiative to reassert authority over land under SPLA control, thwart the rebels' momentum, and exert pressure on John Garang to respond to overtures for the resolution of the conflict in southern Sudan.

15/07/85 Demonstrations break out in Equatoria province against the imposition of the new Cabinet to administer southern Sudan. Equatorian resentment over the reunification of Sudan according to the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords creates additional problems for Siwar el-Dahab in his efforts to promote internal stability.

Sahel

Mali

16/07/85 Mohammed Alhousseni Toure, Secretary General of the Presidency, receives a visit from Ali Moussa Tabass, head of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah People's Bureau and Ambassador to Mali. The Libyan Ambassador was reportedly carrying a message from Colonel Qadhafi to President Moussa Traore. The fact that he was not able to deliver the message directly to the President indicates Mali's desire to keep diplomatic relations with Libya on a strictly formal basis.

Southern Africa

Angola

13/07/85 Angola announces that it is breaking off talks with the United States over a peace settlement in southern Africa in retaliation for a Congressional vote allowing American aid to antigovernment Angolan guerrillas. The Angolan Foreign Ministry announces that the repeal of the Clark Amendment, which has banned aid to rebel Angolan movements since 1976, is part of a joint effort by the United States and South Africa to destabilize the legitimate governments of southern Africa.

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Southern Africa

Mozambique

29/06/85 RENAMO guerrillas attack a convoy of 100 vehicles under military escort, traveling from Maputo along the main north-south highway toward Gaza Province. The attack, which takes place 50 kilometers north of Maputo, results in the deaths of 42 people.

22/07/85 With the intensification of economic difficulties and RENAMO activities throughout the country, Cabo Delgado, Niassa, and Nampula Provinces agree to coordinate their military, economic, and political affairs.

Mozambique/South  
Africa

13/07/85 In a statement issued to reporters in Lisbon, Portugal, RENAMO Secretary General Evo Fernandes announces that he has learned that a force of 1,000 regular South African troops will be sent to Mozambique to protect strategic targets from RENAMO attacks. The targets to be guarded include electrical power lines which carry electricity from the Cabora Bassa dam to South Africa.

Mozambique/Zimbabwe

03/07/85 It is disclosed by Radio Mozambique that the British Government has decided to grant the Mozambican Army \$650,000 in aid. Britain will also organize training courses for Mozambican officers and noncommissioned officers in Zimbabwe to begin in January 1986. Six British officers will be sent to Zimbabwe to join a team of instructors, who are already training the Zimbabwean Army. In addition, Britain will provide aid for the purchase of communications equipment and uniforms.

South Africa

28/06/85 The African National Congress (ANC) calls for a full-scale uprising against white rule in South Africa, urging black police and soldiers to turn their guns against their masters. The ANC also charges that South African police, posing as guerrillas, set a trap responsible for the hand grenade and bomb explosions that killed eight blacks and wounded seven in townships east of Johannesburg.

08/07/85 The Human Sciences Research Council, which is funded by the government and controlled by government-appointed experts, releases the results of a 4-year study involving more than

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100 researchers from South African universities and senior officials of the government. The report calls the apartheid policy a disaster and warns the government that catastrophe looms unless there are fundamental changes. The Research Council's report focused its main attack on the central pillar of the apartheid policy, the carefully constructed labyrinth of laws designed to keep the various races apart economically, socially, and politically.

20/07/85 The government declares an indefinite state of emergency in three large areas of the country hit by major unrest in black townships. The declaration is the first of its kind in 25 years. The emergency measures affect the eastern Cape region, black townships in industrial areas east of Johannesburg, and Johannesburg itself. Many of the 36 magisterial districts are already subject to bans on political meetings. Under the state of emergency the police and army are able to impose curfews, detain people without trial, and search homes and buildings at will. South African security forces arrest 113 persons during the first 24 hours of the state of emergency.

24/07/85 France halts all new investment in South Africa and recalls its ambassador, becoming the first nation to impose economic sanctions as a protest against the white-ruled government's declaration of a state of emergency. The recall of the ambassador follows the announcement by the police that they had used emergency powers to arrest 224 more persons, bringing to 665 the number of people rounded up since the proclamation took effect.

**South Africa/Namibia**

01/07/85 South African troops kill 16 Namibian South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas in Angola, bringing the rebel death toll to 61 in 2 days. South African troops invade six to nine miles into Angola, tracking SWAPO guerrillas, over the weekend.

**Zambia/South Africa**

01/07/85 A bomb explodes at ANC offices in Lusaka. An ANC official states that the bomb exploded late at night, injuring no one. Lusaka residents report gunfire around the offices after the blast. The Zambian Government blames South Africa for the bombing.



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Zimbabwe  
06/07/85

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) party gains an overwhelming victory in the first general elections since independence, winning 63 of the 80 seats reserved for blacks in the 100-member Parliament. Mugabe indicates that the victory is a mandate to dismantle Zimbabwe's British-drafted Constitution (which was to have remained in place until 1990) in order to turn the multiparty democracy into a one-party state. He announces plans to scrap a provision of the charter that guarantees 20 seats to the white minority. Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) party wins resoundingly in Matabeleland, taking all 15 seats and dashing the Prime Minister's hopes of demonstrating that he had electoral support in all areas of Zimbabwe.

08/07/85

600 homes belonging to ZAPU supporters are ransacked by supporters of Mugabe. In some cases members of ZAPU are thrown out of their houses and their belongings piled in the streets. In other cases, ZANU supporters, most of them women, confiscate house keys and lock out residents.

10/07/85

ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo claims that two officials of his party were slain in what he called a campaign of official killing by supporters of the ruling ZANU party. The two officials were opposition candidates in last week's general election.

Southern  
Africa/East/Central  
Africa

Mozambique/Zimbabwe/  
Tanzania

00/07/85

An unknown source claims that during a secret summit in Harare, Tanzania and Zimbabwe both agreed to mount a major campaign against the Mozambique National Resistance Organization (RENAMO). Zimbabwe has previously confirmed that its forces have fought inside Mozambique, and Tanzania maintains military assistance groups within the territory of its southern neighbor. Other sources confirm recent deliveries of 700 tons of arms and ammunition from Czechoslovakia.

West Africa

Ghana

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12/07/85 The arrest of Agbotui Susudzi, a Ghanaian national, and Sharon Scranage, an American employee of the CIA, sets off a media barrage of protest and a spy hunt in Ghana. Most newspapers report that evidence of CIA activity in Ghana comes as no surprise, and then list other incidents in which the CIA was believed to have had a hand. Meanwhile, Ghanaian authorities arrest an unspecified number of Ghanaians on charges of spying, including Navy Commander Commodore J.D. Oppong, Accra lawyer Samuel Okudzeto, and Joseph Edusei, a secretary in the Foreign Ministry. While the incident raises fears that the revelations might jeopardize the recently improved relations between the Rawlings government and the United States, both sides reiterate their commitment to maintaining good relations, which includes increased aid from the United States.

**Guinea**

04/07/85 A coup attempt, led by former Prime Minister Colonel Diarra Traore, fails when forces loyal to Head of State Colonel Lansana Conte take control of the Conakry radio station from where the rebels had announced the abolishment of the governing Military Committee of National Recovery (CMRN). The rebels, who were counting on the support of the population and some army factions, received neither, and after a brief siege, the radio station is back in government hands and Diarra Traore is arrested. Two possible motives for the coup attempt are Traore's personal vendetta against Conte, who had demoted him from Prime Minister to Minister of Education in December 1984, and the discontent of Malinke army officers. Conte, who was in Togo for the ECOWAS summit when the coup attempt took place, returns to Conakry and is greeted with widespread acclaim. As his position within the CMRN is strengthened, he assumes the rank of Brigadier General.

**Ivory Coast**

11/07/85 Three months prior to the presidential elections, President Felix Houphouet-Boigny travels to the city of Gagnoa, the heart of the Bete ethnic group in eastcentral Ivory Coast. Relations between the Bete and the Baoule ethnic group, to which Houphouet belongs, never particularly cordial, have been especially contentious following a Bete uprising in 1970 and a student strike at the national university in 1982. The latter was led by Laurent Gbagbo, a native of Gagnoa. Houphouet's trip follows by several months a Bete fence-mending trip to Yamoussoukro during which the invitation for the Gagnoa trip was extended. Gbagbo, now in

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exile in Paris, has discretely requested permission from Houphouet to return to Ivory Coast.

**Liberia**

18/07/85 Liberia breaks diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union after an incident in which 14 Liberian students are arrested outside the Soviet Embassy. The students are accused of attempting to pass on documents dealing with Liberian defense capabilities. This event is widely interpreted as a warning to the "progressive" elements of the opposition parties who, according to President Doe, maintain links with the Soviet Union.

**Nigeria**

07/27/85 The government signs a protocol on economic, agricultural, and industrial cooperation with China, in keeping with its intention of expanding its commercial ties. The protocol provides for an increase in trade between the two countries, and Chinese assistance and investment in Nigerian agricultural and industrial projects. The two countries will also seek to strengthen cooperation in the fields of health, cultural exchange, and sports.

West Africa/Sahel

**Ghana/Mali**

08/07/85 President Moussa Traore of Mali ends a 2-day state visit to Accra, Ghana, during which a common strategy for the upcoming OAU and ECOWAS conferences is mapped out. Prior to his departure, Traore and Ghanaian Head of State Jerry Rawlings sign a communique touching on bilateral economic issues, as well as the need to strengthen ECOWAS. The two leaders also express the hope that out of the OAU summit meeting will come an economic strategy to meet Africa's pressing needs.

**Ivory Coast/Senegal**

21/06/85 In order to prepare a common front for the upcoming ECOWAS and OAU conferences, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal visits Ivoirian Head of State Felix Houphouet Boigny at Yamoussoukro. Their talks focus on the larger problems confronting Africa, particularly francophone Africa. Houphouet, now in the twilight of his political career, is interested in resuscitating in some form the ghost of unity linking France and francophone Africa.